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THE GENESEO SCALE OF QUALITIES

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Studies of grading have revealed a woeful lack of uniformity within school systems and among systems. Many teachers have been slow to accept any suggestions on grading and have frequently taken the position that outside influences in the way of scales and grading schemes are attempts to bias their judgment. There is a growing realization, however, that judgments can be trained, and that there is nothing mysterious or sacred about personal judgments that would make their standardization sacrilegious. That judgments of the worth of work done need standardization has been pointed out by the studies of Starch and Elliott,¹ Johnson,² Kelly,³ and others.

When the writer took charge of the elementary schools at Geneseo, Illinois, he instituted the following five-step grading scale: P, below 60; U, 60–74; F, 75–84; G, 85–94; E, 95–100. When the grades were handed in at the end of the second period of six weeks, it became evident that teachers were not thinking of the same qualities of work when they recorded a given grade. For example, an F grade from one teacher meant the same in accomplishments as a G grade from another, etc.

Two plans were known that suggested a solution of the problem: (1) the Kansas City High School scheme of posting in the classroom a detailed statement of the work required for each grade given; and (2) the analysis of the qualities of work necessary for each of the seven groups of grades given in the University of Rochester.⁴

In attempting to improve the method of grading employed in Geneseo, it was decided to make use of the suggestions offered by the Kansas City and Rochester plans. In this connection the

¹ DANIEL STARCH and EDWARD C. ELLIOTT, "Reliability of the Grading of High-School Work in English," *School Review*, XX (September, 1912), 442–57; "Reliability of Grading Work in Mathematics," *School Review*, XXI (April, 1913), 254–59.

² FRANKLIN W. JOHNSON, "A Study of High-School Grades," *School Review*, XIX (January, 1911), 13–24.

³ F. J. KELLY, "Teachers' Marks," *Teachers College Contributions to Education*, No. 66 (1914), p. 7.

⁴ Annual Catalogue, University of Rochester 1916–17.

following questions arose: Would it be possible for teachers to put in writing this mysterious and intangible ability to judge school work? If so, would it be possible to compile a scale of qualities of school work by combining and summarizing these written statements?

As an initial step in this investigation each teacher was required to put in writing, without consulting other teachers, her statement of the appropriate qualities of work for each of the five steps on the grading scale. This proved very difficult for most teachers and apparently impossible for some, and yet these teachers who could not reduce their systems of grading to writing were grading pupils daily and determining promotions and non-promotions each year. Many excellent schemes were handed in, however. The second step in the study of this problem was to digest the statements which were submitted and form a scale.

To solve this problem a committee of three teachers was selected. The committee found its task difficult because of the extreme variations in the form of expressions and language used in the individual teacher's reports. The difficulty was further increased by the requirement that terms be used that parents, pupils, and teachers could understand. After a large amount of co-operative work on the part of the committee and the teachers, the scale on the following page was organized. It is unnecessary to state that the committee found it necessary to reword and regroup many times the initial statements which were submitted before the final report was ready.

When the scale had been printed and distributed among the teachers it was found distinctly helpful in the following ways: (1) Teachers get in mind the adopted qualities for each step in the grading scale before marking a set of papers or making up the averages for six weeks. (2) Pupils collected about these posted scales soon after they received a paper or a scholarship report in order to determine the reason for unsatisfactory marks. They saw clearly just what the teacher had in mind when the grades were given and, better still, they frequently discovered just what had to be done to get a step higher on the scale. (3) Parents frequently wanted to know "how you teachers grade anyway." In reply, copies of the scale were frequently given to them. The scale answered many of the questions which the parents asked from time to time.

SCALE OF QUALITIES OF WORK

PUBLIC SCHOOLS, GENSESO, ILLINOIS

P Work	U Work	F Work	G Work	E Work
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Little effort to respond. 2. Only one-half the assigned work attempted. 3. Failure to hand in written work on time. 4. Guessing at answers to questions. 5. Written work shows little ability. 6. No effort to make up work lost during absences. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Knowledge of subject-matter. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very irregular answers inferred. 2. Topical recitation. a) Topical recitation seldom made. b) Detailed questions necessary. 3. Written work. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Work contains one-half of the important facts. b) No effort made to secure proper form, wording, thought, writing, spelling, punctuation, and neatness. II. Preparation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not constant in daily preparation. 2. Preparation covers only about three-fourths of the assignment. III. Attitude. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In recitation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Needs reminding of correct position. b) Inattentive. 2. Toward preparation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Requires much assistance. b) Lack of imagination or creative ability. 3. No regard for team work. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Knowledge of subject-matter. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Irregular answers, not well directed in thought. 2. Topical recitation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) One-half of the recitation topical. b) Question from teacher necessary to complete the recitation. c) Some volunteering. 3. Written work. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Work should contain three-fourths of the important facts. b) Less care shown in form, wording, spelling, punctuation, and neatness than in G work. II. Preparation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daily preparation. 2. Insufficient time spent in preparation. III. Attitude. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In recitation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Attention poor. b) Needs reminding about correct position. 2. Toward preparation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Requires frequent assistance. b) No imagination or creative ability shown. 3. Not enough regard for team work. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Knowledge of subject-matter. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Answers to questions (oral and written) well directed in thought. 2. Topical recitation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Pupil completes the assigned topic. b) Frequent volunteering expected. 3. Written work. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Statements brief and clear. b) Careful in form, wording, thought, writing, spelling, punctuation, and neatness. II. Preparation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparation daily. 2. Preparation done thoughtfully. 3. Written work in on time. 4. Directions of the assignment followed as an outline. III. Attitude. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In recitation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Good position—standing and sitting. b) Attentive. 2. Toward preparation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ability to work without assistance. b) Judgment in using time advantage. 3. Good team work. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Knowledge of subject-matter. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Memory and thought questions answered intelligently. a) No guessing. b) No help from the teacher in recitation. 2. Topical recitation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Assigned work given clearly and thoroughly. b) Outside information and volunteering expected. 3. Written work. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Statements brief but clear. b) Careful in wording, form, thought, writing, spelling, punctuation, and neatness. II. Preparation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daily preparation. 2. Preparation done rapidly and thoughtfully. 3. Written work in on time. 4. Direction of the assignment followed as an outline. III. Attitude. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In the recitation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Good position—standing and sitting. b) Attentive. 2. Toward preparation of lesson to work alone. 3. Good judgment in the use of time. 3. Towards good team work. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Shows respect for the rights of others. b) Co-operates with the teacher.

NOTE.—In all written work deductions shall be made for misspelled words. In case the deductions reduce the grade below 75 per cent, the minimum of an F grade, the pupil may be requested, or he may be permitted, to rewrite the paper, book or dictionary in hand, spelling all words correctly. The grade on the rewritten paper shall be as much above 75 per cent as one-half the distance between 75 and the original grade, disregarding e.g., a paper is worth 90 per cent, but deductions for spelling take the grade down to 70 per cent, the rewritten paper then would be marked 82 ½ per cent or F. The grading scale used is F, 65-70; G, 55-64; J, 45-54; U, 40-44; I, below 40.

The primary purpose of the scale, of course, is, first, to bring about a high correlation between teachers' marks and the quality of work done by the children, and secondly, to enable teachers to agree on qualities of work necessary for each step on the grading scale. How well this is done is shown from Table I which consists of a tabulation of 4,800 semester grades given by twelve teachers during four semesters, the first 100 grades being selected from each teacher's semester report. It will be noted from Table I and Table II

TABLE I
NUMBER OF TEACHERS' GRADES ASSIGNED TO THE VARIOUS STEPS
ON THE GRADING SCALE

Teacher	P	U	F	G	E
G.O.....	7	34	133	186	40
D.B.....	9	39	146	170	36
M.C.....	3	25	142	199	31
S.T.....	2	27	162	176	33
K.D.....		4	77	295	24
J.W.....	8	9	89	259	35
J.B.....		16	175	178	31
L.B.....	2	17	139	200	42
B.B.....	2	10	85	253	50
S.M.....	3	20	63	250	64
A.S.....	3	9	114	214	60
J.V.....	4	58	157	149	32
	43	268	1,482	2,529	478

Reading of Table I: Teacher G.O. gave 7 grades P, 34 U, 133 F, etc.

that there is a positive correlation between the percentage of grades assigned to each step on the scale by the individual teacher and the percentage assigned by the group of teachers. With the exception of K.D. and J.V. the correlation is marked.

The curve of distribution is skewed to the right. It will be observed that the scale itself may account for this. The steps U and P are not well defined. U should be a conditional grade, the upper half of the step passing, and the lower half failing. It is now all interpreted a failure, although not so complete as P. This really leaves three passing grades and partially accounts for the placing of too many grades in the G step. If the qualities can be

restated so as to form a normal curve, the teacher's grades can be made to follow that curve.

TABLE II
PERCENTAGE OF TEACHERS' GRADES ASSIGNED TO THE VARIOUS
STEPS ON THE GRADING SCALE

Teacher	P	U	F	G	E
G.O.....	1.75	8.50	33.25	46.50	10.00
D.B.....	2.25	9.75	36.50	42.50	9.00
M.C.....	0.75	6.25	35.50	49.75	7.75
S.T.....	0.50	6.75	40.50	44.00	8.25
K.D.....	1.00	1.00	19.25	73.75	6.00
J.W.....	2.00	2.25	22.25	64.75	8.75
J.B.....		4.00	43.75	44.50	7.75
L.B.....	0.50	4.25	34.75	50.00	10.50
B.B.....	0.50	2.50	21.25	63.25	12.50
S.M.....	0.75	5.00	15.75	62.50	16.00
A.S.....	0.75	2.25	28.50	53.50	15.00
J.V.....	1.00	14.50	39.25	37.25	8.00
	0.80	5.60	30.90	52.70	9.90

Reading of Table II: Teacher G.O. gave 1.75 per cent grades P, 8.5 per cent U, 33.25 per cent F, etc.

The scale is crude and needs many restatements. The moral significance of E (Excellent), G (Good), F (Fair), U (Unsatisfactory), and P (Poor) is not good. A, B, C, D, and E would probably be better. The note on the scale is an attempt to secure care in spelling in the written work of all departments.